UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

Contemporary Italian Literature - A-L

2627-1-E1902R004-AL

Course title

Literature and disability. Words to convey diagnoses, expectations and hopes: Nati due volte (2000) by Giuseppe Pontiggia, Lo spazio bianco(2008) by Valeria Parrella.
The novels by Giuseppe Pontiggia and Valeria Parrella give voice, respectively, to a father who recounts the life journey of his son – who suffers from spastic dystonic tetraparesis – from birth through to adolescence; and to a mother who, following a premature birth, waits by her baby girl's incubator to find out what prospects for life lie ahead for her. Both are teachers (one at a sixth-form college, the other at an evening secondary school), with a keen eye for 'careful use of language'; through their dialogues with relatives, friends, acquaintances, healthcare staff and school staff, they highlight just how much sensitivity, truth, wisdom and depth – or, conversely, insensitivity, indifference, paternalism, superficiality and harshness – words can convey. These books encourage reflection on how we relate to disability, whilst also serving as a 'guide to effective communication' – one that becomes all the more valuable the more we find ourselves interacting with people who are vulnerable

Topics and course structure

The course will consist of an institutional and preparatory section in which, through a variety of materials and resources (essays, images, videos), we will seek to explore the meaning and purpose of teaching within the degree programme. The lectures will then focus on the works on the syllabus, encouraging active participation from students.

Literature has always been a privileged field of inquiry for the observation of anthropological and socio-cultural phenomena. Literary works give expression to the deep-seated tendencies of every civilisation: values, aspirations, contradictions and conflicts. Furthermore, literature plays a leading role in both individual and collective aesthetic experience: and its nature as the art of the word makes it a particularly fertile ground for the analysis of communicative mechanisms and artistic processes.

The aim of the course is to adopt an approach to texts that highlights the formative aspect of literature. This is

achieved in three main ways.

1. On the thematic level, the significance given to the literary representation of educational processes, for example the traditions of the Bildungsroman, stories of formation, images of childhood, adolescence, school, the family, disability and educational contexts in general.

2. On the aesthetic level, the development of the idea of literature as simulation and artistic projection of experiences, and therefore as an exceptionally rich and varied repertoire of human models, or of psychological constellations, paradigms of behaviour, anthropological, social and cultural contexts.

3. On the linguistic level, attention to the ways in which the subjects (narrators, characters, poetic voices) speak of themselves and of others, of interior and exterior events, of private and public issues, of facts and ideas; the recognition of the different communicative contexts represented, of the adequacy and effectiveness of the expressive choices made, of the existential and social meaning of the various verbal interactions.

The course approaches subjects of a theoretical-methodological and historic-cultural nature, necessary for monographic in-depth study, chosen each year and dedicated to reading and the interpretation of works by one or more authors, including foreign.

Objectives

The objective of the course is in the first place to promote and consolidate the ability to read texts. Through the exercise of interpretation, the student will learn to understand the formal and thematic aspects of the works, the characters of the experiences represented, their organization; and also to question themselves on the relative motivations and implications, including in relation to their personal experience. In addition, the student will have an opportunity to study in depth questions of great significance, the object of the literary works approached each time: historical events, psychological problems, moral problems, relation and communicative situations.

Through the exercise of interpreting the texts, students will learn to measure the depth and the complexity of the universe of the discourse and therefore to appreciate the potential of a conscious use of the word. This way they can corroborate both their communication skills and their autonomy of judgement. A conscious and trained reading skill allows transforming the aesthetic experience into a way of extending one’s own existential experience, improving and refining the comprehension of speech, of choices, of the point of view of those similar to oneself. In the final analysis, literature is an instrument which aims at increasing of responses (emotional, intellectual pragmatic) to new situations and, consequently, to intensity the skills of social interaction.

1. Knowledge and skills:

- Acquire mastery of the complexity of language, the semantic depth of terms, the variety of possible meanings also depending on the context of utterance and the variety of linguistic usages;
- Acquire awareness of the nature and character of literature, and the functions it can perform within a cultural context;
- Learn the main factors of literary communication, with particular attention to the narrative text, and the main categories of analysis, including the fundamental principles of rhetoric and fundamental principles of rhetoric and stylistics;
- To learn about the sociological and anthropological aspects of literary representation;
- Appreciate the importance of the formal structuring of texts with regard to the effectiveness of representing experiences.

2. Application of knowledge and understanding:

- To enrich one's expressive and communicative skills, increasing the ownership and precision of language;
- To develop awareness of the communicative and expressive properties of language, paying particular attention to the semantic depth of words
- To develop the ability to interpret the speech of others, appreciating the difference between contexts and circumstances;

3. Autonomy of judgement

- To develop reading skills, cultivating and exercising one's linguistic and textual sensitivity
- To acquire sufficient familiarity with language and critical thinking to compare the interpretation of texts proposed by the secondary bibliography with one's own reading experience

4. Communicative skills

- Acquire skills of synthesis in the exposition of events, in particular of novel plots
- Learn to articulate coherent and well-founded critical considerations on the texts;

5. Learning skills:

- To acquire the ability to read concrete experience also through virtual experiences (or simulations of experience) offered by the practice of literary reading, increasing one's critical and self-critical capacities;
- To develop the ability to focus on the meaning of personal experiences, in relation to social and historical circumstances
- The ability to rework and organise the knowledge learnt.

Methodologies

Prerequisites:
A good high-school level in humanities.
Italian and European history of the 20th century.
Good expressive ability.

Methodologies:
The course consists of 28 2-hour lectures that will be conducted in delivery mode (face-to-face, 70%) and interactive mode (30%).
During classroom work, ample space will be devoted to dialogue, collective discussion, reading and textual commentary exercises (themes, linguistic and rhetorical aspects, narrative modes, cultural paradigms), individual or small group exercises to promote the ability to pay attention, observe, read and acquire expressive techniques.
The teaching activities will take place in the classroom, subject to the organisational reasons of the degree course and/or the University, especially in relation to the availability of classrooms at the University.
The lectures will focus on textual analysis, aimed at highlighting the distinctive features of the works: linguistic and rhetorical aspects, narrative modes, cultural paradigms.

Online and offline teaching materials

Text, images, video materials.
Materials, resources and tools used in class are available on the course e-learning platform.
Attendees and nonattendees are advised to register, in order to access in-depth materials as well.

The lecturer also provides materials to support non-traditional students in studying and preparing for the exam: short recordings (presentation of the syllabus, the exam bibliography, how to organise the exam; indications on the oral interview; recapitulations of aspects and salient concepts covered in the lecture); she points out video materials available on the web (interviews with writers, lectures, documentaries, etc.) and websites. The lecturer is available (on request) to organise a distance meeting at the end of the course to recapitulate the topics covered, reiterate some indications for preparing for the exam, and answer students' questions or doubts.

**In order to take the exam, foreign students must provide proof of Italian language skills at B2 level.
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Programme and references

Bibliography

Institutional part:
Institutional part
Mario Barenghi, *Cosa possiamo fare con il fuoco? Letteratura e altri ambienti*(Quodlibet); only essays*: *Cosa possiamo fare con il fuoco? Un'ipotesi sulle origini della letteratura*, pp. 11-24; *Perché si legge? Pretesto calviniano sulla funzione educativa della letteratura*, pp. 35-44; *Silenzi in aula. Breve riflessione sul mestiere dell'insegnante*, pp. 53-58.

A book of your choice from the following:
Clara Sereni, *Manicomio primavera* (1989)
Silvia Avallone, *Acciaio* (2010)
Donatella Di Pietrantonio, *Mia madre è un fiume* (2011)
Michele Mari, *Leggenda privata* (2017)
Valeria Parrella, *Almarina* (2019)

Monographic part
Giuseppe Pontiggia, *Nati due volte*
Valeria Parrella, *Lo spazio bianco*

Critical bibliography:
Maria Rosa Bricchi, *Nati due volte*, "Autografo", a. XVII, n. 42, gennaio-giugno 2001, pp. 154-158
Rossana Dedola, *L'handicap attraverso il caleidoscopio*, in *Le vie dorate: con Giuseppe Pontiggia*, a cura di Daniela Marcheschi, Parma, MUP, 2009, pp. 106-118
Giovanni Raboni, *Un padre racconta il figlio nato due volte*, "Corriere della Sera", 2 settembre 2000, p. 35
Vittorio Spinazzola, *Il coraggio di Pontiggia*, in Tirature '02, a cura di Vittorio Spinazzola, pp. 82-86
Viviana Scarinci, Se il danno della famiglia si fa paese, "Doppiozero", 29.08.2015, https://www.doppiozero.com/se-il-danno-della-famiglia-si-fa-paese

**N.B. **The recorded lectures, which are aimed in particular at students who do not attend classes, are compulsory in the same way as the prescribed reading material.

Assessment method

For Erasmus students: a good knowledge of Italian is required since the texts in
programme must be read in the original language and the oral test is taken in Italian

**In order to take the exam, foreign students must provide proof of Italian language skills at B2 level.

NB: The recorded lectures are aimed specifically at non-attending students and are compulsory in the same way as

the course texts.**

Assessment methods

Type of test: oral interview in Italian language. No intermediate tests are scheduled.
This mode was chosen because it is consistent with the formative objectives of the teaching and suitable for assessing comprehension of the text and the ability to critically rework the topics addressed in the course, mastery of expressive registers, and dialogue skills. In general, it is believed that the chosen mode also benefits in countering a now well attested sociolinguistic phenomenon, namely the loss of competence in oral elocution among the younger generation, also fomented, during the schooling process, by the indiscriminate dissemination of written tests.

Evaluation Criteria:
The interview consists of checking the level of knowledge, understanding and reworking of the topics covered during the lectures, of all the items (volumes and essays) in the bibliography, and of the in-depth materials used in class (for frequent attendees only), as well as the ability to apply the concepts and tools used during the classroom activities and/or learned from the texts in the bibliography.
Students are expected to demonstrate the ability to answer questions in a relevant, clear, correct and argued manner, using critical terminology with ownership. Part of the colloquium consists of a commentary on a passage, theme or aspect of the works in the program, and/or the presentation of exercises or in-depth studies carried out during the course (for frequent attendees only)
Since understanding the letter of the text is an inescapable condition for literary interpretation, the use of a good vocabulary (including online, of course) is recommended when preparing for the colloquium.

The Dublin descriptors will be used for assessment: the level bands are as follows
Low level: Not sufficient
Knowledge and Understanding: The student shows limited and fragmentary knowledge of the texts and topics covered, with misunderstandings of the texts proposed.
Ability to Apply Knowledge: The student is not able to verify on the texts the general considerations on poetics, style, reading effects of the authors examined; he/she is very partially able to synthesise the contents of the texts presented, he/she is not able to contextualise and compare them.
Autonomy of Judgement: lacks critical capacity and autonomy of judgement; depends exclusively on information provided by the teacher or the critical bibliography.
Communication skills: The student has a stunted, approximate, stereotyped oral expression and a poor command of discipline-specific language.
Learning skills: The student has a limited ability to rework knowledge and link it to her own experience as a reader; a poor awareness of the usefulness of literary reading as a device for dislocating the self, as an opening to simulations of realities and experiences other than one's own, in the perspective of a more articulate ductility in the face of different educational situations.
Average level (18-24/30): Sufficient - Good
Knowledge and comprehension: The student shows a general knowledge of the texts and topics addressed, albeit with some gaps, imprecision on specific but not essential aspects, or some misunderstandings in the analysis of the texts.
Ability to Apply Knowledge: The student is able, albeit with some difficulty, to verify on texts the general considerations on poetics, style, reading effects of the authors examined, at the teachers' prompting; she/he is able to summarise the texts presented in a discrete manner, to interpret, contextualise and compare them correctly. She/he can recognise different expressive registers in literary texts.
Autonomy of judgement: She/he shows partial autonomy in formulating critical evaluations, often limited to the reiteration of others' judgements.
Communication skills: She/he has a clear and sufficiently precise expression, a fair command of the specific language of the discipline. Is aware of the need to use different linguistic registers according to communicative situations.

Learning ability: She/he has a discrete ability to rework knowledge and link it to her own experience as a reader; she/he has a partial awareness of the usefulness of literary reading as a device for dislocating the self, as an openness to simulations of realities and experiences other than her own, in the perspective of a more articulate ductility in the face of different educational situations.

High level (25-30/30): Distinguished – Excellent

Knowledge and Understanding: The student shows thorough and solid knowledge of the texts and topics addressed; understands and analyses the proposed texts without uncertainty.

Ability to Apply Knowledge: The student knows how to find in the texts, with confidence and effective personal observations, the general considerations on poetics, style, reading effects of the authors examined; with argumentative effectiveness they know how to analyse, synthesise, interpret, contextualise and compare the texts presented, also making use of interdisciplinary links. She/he know how to recognise the different expressive registers in literary texts, associating them with the situations that are the subject of the literary representation.

Autonomy of Judgement: She/he demonstrates excellent critical ability, autonomy of judgement, originality in the analysis and interpretation of texts.

Communication skills: The student has clear, rigorous, fluent and appropriate expression. Is fully aware of the need to use different linguistic registers according to communicative situations.

Ability to learn: The student shows excellent independent learning skills, is able to effectively rework knowledge and link it to her own experience as a reader; she/he has full awareness of the usefulness of literary reading as a device for dislocation of the self, as an openness to simulations of realities and experiences other than her own, in the perspective of a more articulate ductility in the face of different educational situations.

NB: the section of the course's e-learning page devoted to 'Materials used in lectures' is intended exclusively for attending students.

For Erasmus students: a good knowledge of Italian is required since the texts in the programme must be read in the original language and the oral test is taken in Italian.

NB: students are reminded that:

- all the texts in the syllabus must be read and studied in full
- at the oral interview they must present a **copy** of all the texts in the syllabus
- by law, the works of living authors, and up to the 70th year after their death, may only be photocopied in full to the extent of 15% of the volume or essay.

NB. Examination interviews will follow the order of registration. On an average day, 14-15 interviews will be held, subject to the lecturer's other institutional commitments. Once enrolment has been completed, a calendar will be communicated to those enrolled with possible continuation days. Students will be able to exchange dates and times amongst themselves. In order to have a reliable timetable, if a student decides not to attend the interview, it is recommended that she/he cancels in good time or, once enrolment has closed, communicates her/his absence to. Those who have timetabling or scheduling requirements due to work problems are requested to notify the lecturer in good time (angela.borghesi@unimib.it).

Office hours

Reception by appointment by writing to angela.borghesi@unimib.it

Reception takes place in the lecturer's office, room 4098, floor 4, Agora building (formerly u6). It is possible to request a remote reception, which takes place in the lecturer's virtual room: https://unimib.webex.com/meet/angela.borghesi

Programme validity

The programmes are valid for two academic years. Upon request, the lecturer may allow an extension of time for the validity of the course (write to the institutional address angela.borghesi@unimib.it)

Course tutors and assistants

Dr. ssa Alessandra Farina
Dott. Alessandro Terreni

Sustainable Development Goals

QUALITY EDUCATION | GENDER EQUALITY | REDUCED INEQUALITIES